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## ARTICLES.

■ MCCARTHY TIME?

Security and  
Terrorism

VICTOR NAVASKY

Can it happen again? Are we in for a new wave of McCarthyism, a Reagan repression, Cold War II, a witch hunt 1980s-style, as many on the left suggest? Giving apparent credence to this fear is the creation of the new Security and Terrorism Subcommittee of Senator Strom Thurmond's Judiciary Committee. Its chairman is Jeremiah Denton, Republican of Alabama, the retired admiral who got elected with the strong support of the Moral Majority because, among other things, he spoke of the death penalty for adulterers, said things like, "Our military is in the worst shape it has been since George Washington walked around barefoot at Valley Forge" and was a war hero who had spent seven and a half years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

Other far-right Republican members of this new subcommittee include the partially disabled John East of North Carolina, whom one Washington civil liberties lawyer has taken to calling "Helms on wheels." And Utah's Orrin Hatch, whose staff aide predicted before Ronald Reagan was elected that the new subcommittee would investigate, among others, the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), a research and information center on our neighbors to the South; *Mother Jones*, the San Francisco-based magazine which specializes in ecological muckraking; and the Institute for Policy Studies, the left-oriented Washington think tank which has recently come to prominence as the thinly disguised target of *The Spike*, a polemical best-selling novel.

The jurisdiction of the new subcommittee is still murky, but it appears to include terrorism, subversion, internal security and, if reports of a decision taken at a recent executive session are correct, all oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration (both of which formerly fell within the ambit of the Criminal Law Subcommittee, headed by the moderately civil libertarian Senator Charles Mathias, Republican of Maryland). Just where the jurisdiction of the Denton subcommittee stops, and that of Senator Barry Goldwater's Committee on Intelligence starts, is unclear. Or, as one longtime Senate staffer puts it, "The main thing that is unclear is whether the reference to terror in the title of the new subcommittee is a reference to the subjects they intend to investigate or to the reign they intend to instigate."

Victor Navasky is the editor of *The Nation* and the author of *Namings*.

It is also unclear, a committee, since days when Joe Mc House Committee o

to House Committee on Internal Security in 1969, abolished in 1975) and the less notorious Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (abolished in 1977), all worked closely with J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I. and various other Federal bureaus to ferret out "agents of the Communist conspiracy," to purge the Red taint from the State Department, trade unions, the Army, the church, the entertainment industry, the academy, et al. After all, despite the record of economic, political and psychological devastation compiled by these Red hunters, 150 members supported a resolution introduced by Representative John Ashbrook to establish a similar body in the House last year.

And the authors of the 3,000-page, nine-volume report issued by the Heritage Foundation, whose chapter on intelligence, in addition to calling for the legalization of wiretaps, bugs, breaking and entering, the placement of informers in dissident organizations and the exemption of the intelligence agencies from the Freedom of Information Act, also requested "the restoration of some Congressional body with similar functions [to the invaluable HUAC and SISS]" as "a necessary part of an adequate internal security program." That this clarion call to give "national safety" priority over civil liberty wherever the two are in tension is taken seriously by the Reagan Administration may be gathered from the participation of Edwin Meese 3d, the President's new chief counsel, in Heritage Foundation deliberations. Meese has been quoted as saying the Administration will "rely heavily" on the report. [See Jay Peterzell, "Unleashing the Dogs of McCarthyism," *The Nation*, January 17.]

My own sense is that history will not quite repeat itself. The power of such committees to stigmatize and punish by name-naming and name-calling had pretty much played itself out by the late '50s. And by the early '60s various committee targets had figured out new and sometimes successful strategies to embarrass and undermine their tormentors, such as appearing in costume, or the precedent of those members of Women Strike for Peace who, when called before the committee in 1962, packed the hall with women and children, bringing flowers for all the witnesses. Then, too, despite the new and troubling (and C.I.A.-inspired?) media obsession with K.G.B. "moles" and "disinformation," neither Reagan nor his New Right cadres and lobbyists have made the internal Communist menace a dominant theme, although their emphasis on the Soviet threat has domestic reverberations. Partly this is because today's left is more open than secret. Also, there are no contemporary equivalents of the great political "spy" cases of the cold-war years (Judith Coplon, Alger Hiss, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg) which so conveniently fa-